



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2009 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Racial discrimination has been studied as a possible reason for the health disparities reported between races and ethnicities. Research has shown more than 100 studies that link racial discrimination to physical health for African Americans/Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics.¹ Some studies found a relationship between discrimination and delays in obtaining medical tests,^{2,3} mammography screening, and Pap tests;⁴ however, some research has found mixed results concerning the use of preventive health services.⁵ The perception of racial discrimination has also been associated with high levels of stress,⁶ mental health problems,⁷⁻¹² and increased utilization of mental health treatment when racial identity was not controlled.¹³ This report examined the impact of racial discrimination on health behaviors and mental health problems, and on the need and utilization of psychological treatment among California women.

In 2009, 4,924 respondents to the California Women's Health Survey were asked: *Have you ever experienced discrimination because of your race or ethnicity?* Regarding mental health needs, women were asked whether they had felt overwhelmed and whether they wanted help to deal with problems (and if so, if they had gotten help). To assess health behaviors, women were asked within how many years they had their last routine check-up; and if they had ever had a Pap test, mammogram; or hysterectomy. Responses were weighted in these analyses by age and race/ethnicity to reflect the 2000 California adult female population. Differences between groups were evaluated using Chi square statistics.

Highlights

- Nearly one fifth of women ages 18 and above reported ever experiencing racial discrimination (19.9 percent, $N = 771$).
- Women who reported that they very often felt overwhelmed in the previous 30 days noted more racial discrimination (40.7 percent) than women who often felt overwhelmed (31.3 percent); sometimes felt overwhelmed (24.0 percent); rarely felt overwhelmed (23.9 percent); or never felt overwhelmed (18.0 percent; $P < .0001$) (Figure 1).
- Among women who reported feeling overwhelmed, those who noted wanting help for their problems reported higher rates of racial discrimination (32.1 percent) than women who did not want help (19.4 percent; $P < .0001$) (Figure 1).
- Among women who wanted help dealing with their problems, those who did not get help reported more racial discrimination (38.8 percent) than women who got the help they needed (29.0 percent; $P < .05$) (Figure 1).
- Women who said they had not had a hysterectomy reported higher rates of racial discrimination (23.4 percent) than women who reported having had a hysterectomy (19.2 percent; $P < .01$) (Figure 2).

The Relationship of Racial Discrimination to Health Behaviors and Mental Health of California Women, 2009

Department of Health Care Services
California Department of Public Health
Office of Women's Health

Public Health Message:

For California women, higher rates of discrimination are associated with feeling overwhelmed and a need for mental health treatment. However, those who reported more discrimination also noted obtaining less mental health treatment, even though they indicated wanting treatment. Women could benefit from interventions that address the role discrimination can play in their mental health and their lack of mental health treatment.

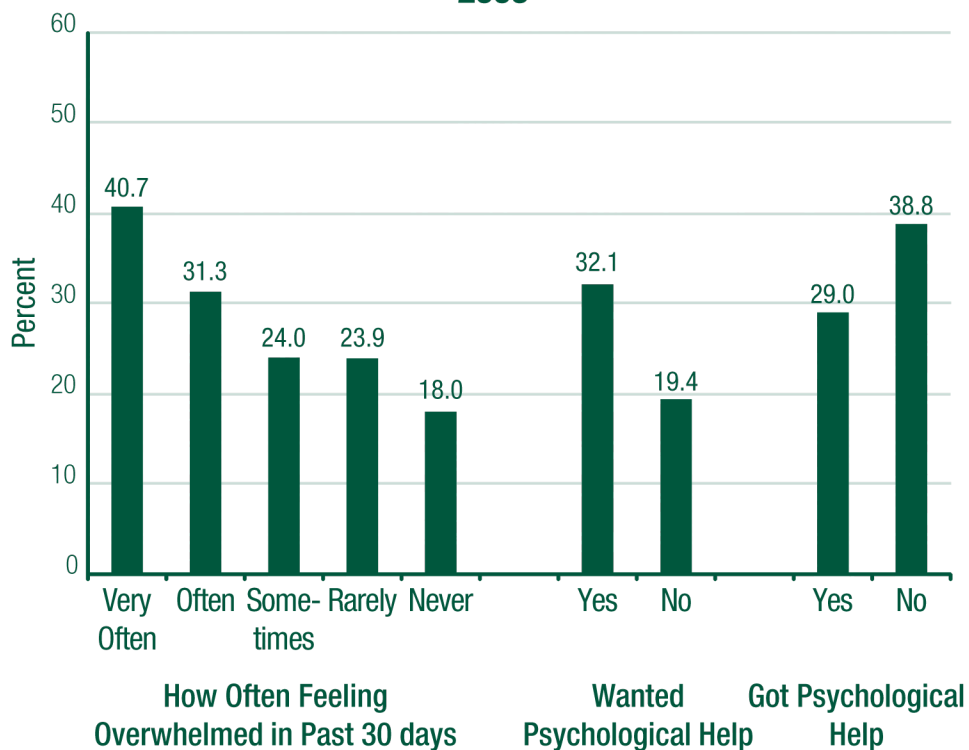
The Relationship of Racial Discrimination to Health Behaviors and Mental Health of California Women, 2009

Department of Health Care
Services
California Department of Public
Health
Office of Women's Health

- No significant difference was found in women who experienced racial discrimination based on timing of last routine check-up or having ever had a Pap test or mammogram.

Figure 1

Racial Discrimination Rates of California Women by Feeling Overwhelmed,* Wanting Help, and Whether They Got Help,** 2009**



* $P < .05$, ** $P < .0001$

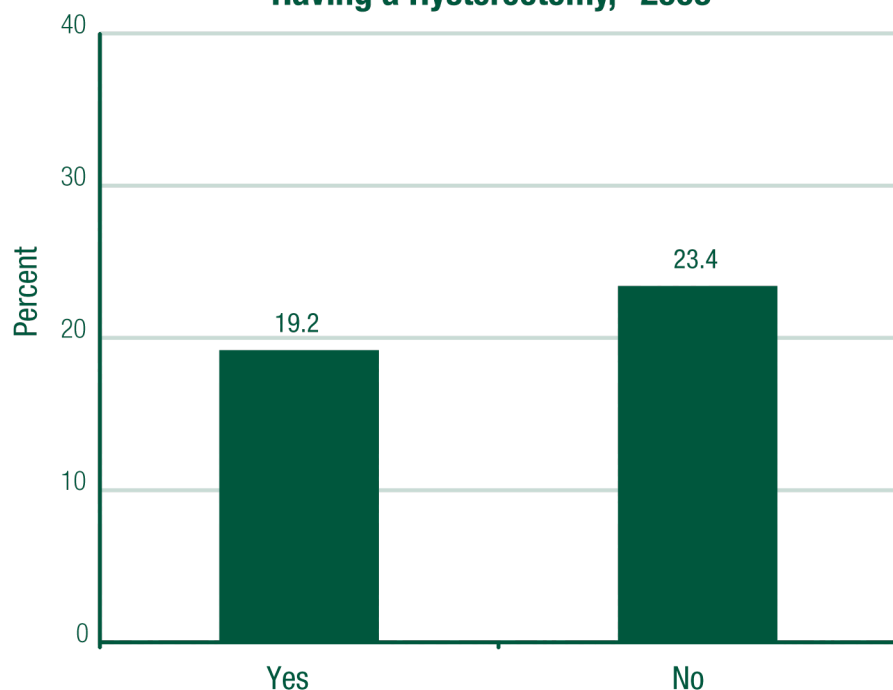
Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2009

*The Relationship of
Racial Discrimination
to Health Behaviors
and Mental Health of
California Women, 2009*

Department of Health Care
Services
California Department of Public
Health
Office of Women's Health

Figure 2

**Racial Discrimination Rates for California Women by History of
Having a Hysterectomy,* 2009**



* $P < .01$

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2009

- 1 Smedley B, Jeffries M, Adelman L, Cheng J. Race, racial inequality and health inequities: separating myth from fact. Briefing paper, The Opportunity Agenda 2008. http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/assets/uploads/file/Race_Racial_Inequality_Health.pdf. Accessed October 2010.
- 2 Casagrande SS, Gary TL, Laveist TA, Gaskin DJ, Cooper LA. Perceived discrimination and adherence to medical care in a racially integrated community. *J Gen Intern Med*. 2007;22(3):389-395.
- 3 Van Houtven CH, Volis CI, Oddone EZ, et al. Perceived discrimination and reported delay of pharmacy prescriptions and medical tests. *J Gen Intern Med*. 2005;20:578-583.
- 4 Hausmann LRM, Jeong K, Bost JE, Ibrahim SA. Perceived discrimination in a care and use of preventive health services. *J Gen Intern Med*. 2008;23(10):1679-1684.
- 5 Dailey AB, Kasl SV, Holford TR, Jones BA. Perceived racial discrimination and nonadherence to screening mammography guidelines: results from the race differences in the screening of mammography process study. *Am J Epidemiol*. 2007;165(11):1287-1295.

*The Relationship of
Racial Discrimination
to Health Behaviors
and Mental Health of
California Women, 2009*

Department of Health Care
Services
California Department of Public
Health
Office of Women's Health

- 6 Ong AD, Fuller-Rowell T, Burrow AL. Racial discrimination and the stress process. *J Pers Soc Psychol*. 2009;96(6):1259-1271.
- 7 Klonoff EA, Landrine H, Ullman JB. Racial discrimination and psychiatric symptoms among blacks. *Cultur Diver Ethnic Minor Psychol*. 1999;5(4):329-339.
- 8 Hwang WC, Goto S. The impact of perceived racial discrimination on the mental health of Asian American and Latino college students. *Cultur Diver Ethnic Minor Psychol*. 2008;14(4):326-335.
- 9 Broman CL, Mavaddat R, Hsu S. The experience and consequences of perceived racial discrimination: a study of African Americans. *J Black Psychol*. 2000;26(2):165-180.
- 10 Gee GC, Ryan A, Laflamme DJ, Holt J. Self-reported discrimination and mental health status among African descendants, Mexican Americans, and other Latinos in the New Hampshire REACH 2010 initiative: the added dimension of immigration. *Am J Public Health*. 2006;96(10):1821-1828.
- 11 Gee GC, Spencer M, Chen J, Yip T, Takeuchi DT. The association between self-reported racial discrimination and 12-month DSM-IV mental disorders among Asian Americans nationwide. *Soc Sci Med*. 2007;64:1984-1996.
- 12 Noh S, Kasper V, Wickrama KA. Overt and subtle racial discrimination and mental health: preliminary findings for Korean immigrants. *Am J Public Health*. 2007;97(7):1269-1274.
- 13 Smart Richman L, Kohn-Wood LP, Williams DR. The role of discrimination and racial identity for mental health service utilization. *J Soc Clin Psychol*. 2007;26(8):960-981.

Submitted by: Patricia Lee, Ph.D. and Terri Thorfinnson, J.D., Department of Health Care Services, California Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health, (916) 440-7633, Patricia.Lee@dhcs.ca.gov